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ABSTRACT

This paper is designed to help educators understand the conditions under which school counselors can make their greatest contributions to educational excellence. Ultimately, the sole justification for the presence of the school counselor is that his work contributes directly to both the specific and broad purposes of education. The author suggests that when a school counselor is employed, the administration, faculty, parents and community should expect him to have the ability to plan, counsel, consult and coordinate in a professional and accountable manner. The results of the counselor's efforts should facilitate the learning process for every pupil. The above 4 areas of expertise are elaborated and are the central focus of this paper. (RK)

ED 059505

. THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR:

. HIS WORK ENVIRONMENT

. ROLES

a n d

. COMPETENCIES

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I. INTRODUCTION

Educational excellence requires teamwork. The unique contribution of the school counselor to the educational team is not always clearly defined. Even though there is general agreement about the need for counselors, there is confusion about how best to make use of their potential.

This paper is designed to help educators understand the conditions under which school counselors can make their greatest contributions to educational excellence. Ultimately the sole justification for the presence of the school counselor is that his work contributes directly to both the specific and broad purposes of education.

II. THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR AS A PERSON

The qualities of a counselor as enumerated in this paper are by no means inclusive but are placed here as guidelines for colleges and universities in screening applicants for counselor training programs and for administrators in the selection and/or promotion of counselors in their school districts.

The school counselor should exhibit the following personal qualities:

1. Belief in the worth inherent in each individual, in his capacity for growth and change, and in his ability to cope with life situations.

2. Confidence in the capacity of the individual to establish appropriate values and goals and develop in directions beneficial to himself and society.

3. Communicate realistically in the language and culture of the population(s) being served.

4. Concern for the individual as a person whose feelings, values, goals, and success are important and who respects and appreciates individuality including the right and need of those whom he counsels to find their own best values, to determine their own goals, and to find ways to achieve these goals.

5. Respect for a wide range of interests, attitudes, and beliefs; willingness to question the old and investigate the new; and receptive to new ideas, achievements, and research findings.

6. Understanding of himself and the ways in which his personal values, feelings, and needs can affect his work and recognition of his own limitations and ability to make judgments as to when his limitations require referral to others better able to assist the person seeking assistance.

7. Commitment to counseling as a profession and as a means of assisting individuals in the development of their potentialities.

8. Personal qualities which make him able and willing to work with individuals of varying physical, mental, cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds.

9. Tolerance for ambiguity and the ability to face ambiguity without its disorganizing his work and life.

10. Verbal and quantitative abilities sufficient to think, reason, and solve problems through intelligent inquiry.

11. Acceptance of self and his own behavior without using other individuals to satisfy his own needs.

III. THE WORK ENVIRONMENT OF THE SCHOOL COUNSELOR

The contributions of the school counselor are dependent upon the existence of an environment consistent with his responsibilities. The work environment of the counselor should be one in which the counselor has freedom to exercise his competencies on a professional level.

Characteristics of the psychological environment include favorable interpersonal relations among the school staff, a permissive atmosphere within the counseling program, and forward-looking administrative and personnel policies. Physical conditions of work include appropriate clerical and secretarial assistance, office facilities and equipment, and guidance materials of various kinds.

The following are the principal characteristics of a psychological and physical environment which will assist the school counselor in fulfilling his professional responsibilities.

- The counselor's communication with pupils and parents must be considered confidential. In matters of communication and ethics, the counselor accepts as his guide the ETHICAL STANDARDS of the American Personnel and Guidance Association.

- The counselor should be free from teaching, administrative, and clerical responsibilities which would interfere with the fulfillment of his professional responsibilities.

- The school organization should reflect the distinct roles of the school counselor by providing high-level administrative representation, appropriate opportunities for in-service education and research, and program evaluation. Professional supervision and coordination with other pupil personnel services are essential to the counselor's total effectiveness.

- The counselor should have major responsibilities to participate in program planning and curriculum development and other school development efforts. Opportunities should be provided for counselors to interpret their efforts and services to pupils, teachers, administrators, parents, and the community. In addition, the counselor should have the freedom and responsibility to inform administrators if and when the school program is insensitive to the individuality of pupils.

- The counselor should have physical facilities appropriate to his work.

- The counselor should have the opportunity to initiate and have systematic counseling and conference appointments with pupils during school hours. The number of pupils for whom a counselor is responsible should be realistic and consistent with his unique responsibilities.

- The counselor should have the necessary adult clerical assistance and equipment.

- Definite criteria, consistent with this policy statement, should be used as a basis for counselor selection.

IV. ROLES AND COMPETENCIES

A. Planning, Organization, and Evaluation

Role--The counselor must be able to utilize a planning process to define needs and priorities and to determine appropriate objectives. The counselor must be able to organize personnel, physical resources, and activities in relation to the defined needs, priorities and objectives and evaluate the guidance program so as to maintain its contribution to the total educational program.

1. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to appraise the characteristics of individual pupils, describe the needs and potentialities of individuals, and identify individual differences.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. review and recommend standardized tests appropriate to the needs of the population(s) served

b. interpret test results so that they may be used as instructional tools

c. provide quantitative, qualitative, and subjective information for utilization in planning programs for individuals

2. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to assess the needs and/or expectations of the population(s) to be served.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. identify areas of concern and formulate assessment questions

b. construct or collect instruments for data collection based on information required to serve assessment questions

c. develop a plan for involving members from the appropriate population(s) in gathering data

d. conduct data gathering or measurement sessions

e. analyze and interpret data around assessment questions to formulate needs

f. advance competencies of other personnel in needs assessment techniques

3. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to determine guidance priorities based on identified needs.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. organize need assessment data into criteria for action

b. define existing conditions and the changes that should be made

4. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to formulate measurable objectives from identified needs and priorities.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. classify types of objectives so an economy of thought and action may be achieved

b. define objectives in behavioral terms

c. describe conditions under which objectives can be achieved

d. develop or select appraisal techniques

e. develop a plan for gathering and interpreting performance data

f. define criteria for knowing when objectives are achieved in operational terms

g. establish time frame for achievement

5. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to formulate specific tasks relative to achieving objectives.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. describe personnel, material, and financial resources necessary to accomplish objectives

b. develop sequential plan of action coordinating resources necessary for each task on a time line

c. describe alternative actions that could be taken to reach desired changes

d. describe the ways in which a course of action would be put into practice

e. develop a plan for pupil, staff, parent, and community involvement

6. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to coordinate a continuing evaluation.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. establish a specific evaluation design

b. measure the degree of attainment of objectives

c. describe system to monitor the task to identify or predict strengths or weaknesses in either the procedural design or its implementation

d. communicate evaluation results to decision makers in usable form

e. develop a recycling plan to feed the evaluation of a given task back to the need assessment phase of planning

B. Counseling

Role--The counselor must be able to develop and maintain effective individual and group relationships and to provide assistance in educational, occupational, and personal needs and concerns. In the counseling relationship, he:

- assists the pupil seeking help to understand that he is to retain full freedom of choice and decision and that the counselor has no authority or responsibility to approve or disapprove of the choices or decisions of the pupil

- assists the pupil to understand and accept himself as an individual, thereby making it possible for the pupil to express and develop an awareness of his own ideas, feelings, values, and needs

- seeks to develop in the pupil a greater ability to cope with and solve problems and an increased competence in making educational and occupational decisions and plans for which he and his parents are responsible

- utilizes educational, occupational, personal, and environmental information with the pupil, in relation to his plans, choices, needs, or concerns

1. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to formulate a model of counseling which includes steps and stages in the counseling process.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. accept pupils in the counseling process with minimal threat and confusion

b. establish tentative goals with each pupil

c. utilize whatever counseling techniques are necessary in assisting each pupil

d. assist pupils in the decision-making process

2. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to formulate a model for explaining individual behavior and considering possible changes.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. identify progress or change in individual through counseling relationship

b. translate information into goals and decisions

3. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to understand the various kinds of group experiences in terms of goals or procedures.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. analyze the dynamics of the group and provide feedback as appropriate

b. demonstrate techniques such as feedback, sharing feelings, etc.

4. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to establish counseling relationships within the limits of the ETHICAL STANDARDS of the American Personnel and Guidance Association.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. respect the integrity and promote the welfare of the pupil

b. inform pupil of the conditions under which he may receive counseling assistance

c. keep confidential the counseling relationship and information resulting therefrom except when the pupil's condition is such as to require others to assume responsibility for him, or when there is clear and imminent danger to the pupil or to others. Under these conditions the counselor is expected to report this fact to an appropriate responsible authority, and/or take such other emergency measures as the situation demands

d. reserve the right to consult with any other professionally competent person about the pupil

e. decline to initiate or shall terminate the counseling relationship when he cannot be of professional assistance

f. the counselor, when learning from the counseling relationship of conditions which are likely to harm others over whom his institution or agency has responsibility, is expected to report the condition to the appropriate responsible authority, but in such a manner as not to reveal the identity of the pupil

g. ascertain when the work setting calls for any variation from the above, justify the conditions which call for variations, and specify and make known to all concerned these variations

C. Consultation

Role--The counselor must be able to serve as a resource person for specific needs of concerns of individuals or groups. Through consultation he:

- interprets the program of guidance services and assists parents in understanding their role in supporting the efforts of the program
- provides parents with information about school policies and procedures, school course offerings, educational and occupational opportunities and requirements, and resources that can contribute to the fullest development of their children
- assists pupils and parents to make a long-range plan of study for the school career and assume responsibility for periodic review and revision of such plans, according to need, as shown by such factors as changes in the curriculum, pupil appraisal data, school achievement, the pupil's maturity, and new goals
- assists the pupil and his parents in relating the pupil's interests, aptitudes, and abilities to current and future educational and occupational opportunities and requirements, long-range educational plans, and choices
- assists parents in developing realistic perceptions of their children's aptitudes, abilities, interests, attitudes, and development as related to educational and occupational planning, school progress, and personal-social development
- interprets information on pupils to parents in an effort to assist the parents in gaining insight to the student as a person
- assists pupils and parents who need such services to be aware of and to accept referral to other specialists in pupil personnel services and community agencies
- assists in giving pupils and parents an understanding of procedures for making applications and financial plans for attending educational or training institutions and for making application for employment
- assists in the educational and occupational planning of pupils who have withdrawn or who have been graduated from the school
- assists the pupil to become knowledgeable of the social and cultural setting within which he operates, including such groups as his family, peers, and significant others; with emphasis on awareness of the opportunities and requirements of his social environment such as social expectations and customs and the ability to differentiate his roles in the social groups with which he is or may be affiliated

- consults with school administrators, members of the school faculty, and other pupil personnel services relative to the curricular offerings which will meet the abilities, interest, and needs of pupils

- serves as a consultant to curriculum planners and school policy-makers with special responsibility for helping pupils achieve greater learning efficiency so that they may receive maximum benefit from the school

- provides materials and information concerning such matters as the characteristics and needs of the pupil population, follow-up studies, and employment trends for use in curriculum study and revision

- participates in in-service training programs for teachers, staff meetings, and case conferences through which he discusses his own role, interprets a child-centered point of view, interprets the integration of occupational-career orientation, and encourages effective use of pupil data in teaching activities and guidance services given by teachers

- assists teachers in identifying pupils with special needs or problems and keeps teachers informed of developments concerning individual pupils which might have a bearing upon the classroom situation

- shares appropriate individual pupil data with all staff members, with due regard to confidentiality

- organizes and conducts case conferences regarding a specific pupil with teachers and other pupil personnel team members

- assists teachers in providing group guidance experience for pupils

- facilitates the development of communication between pupils and faculty

- develops communications between elementary, junior high, high school, vocational school, and college counselors

- works with staff and community agents concerning the development of criteria and procedures for pupil occupational and educational placement

1. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to formulate, orally and in writing, guidance concepts, services and programs in a functional context to others.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. assists students, staff and parents in understanding that guidance is primarily a preventive and developmental process

b. involves parents and other appropriate personnel in ameliorating specific problems or concerns

c. synthesizes data gathered from follow-up studies, community surveys, etc., into usable information for pupils, staff, and parents, and provides assistance in utilizing such data

2. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to formulate and maintain effective working relationships with members of all populations served.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. observe and interpret pupil behavior to staff, parents, or pupils

b. assist teachers in learning to observe and record behavior systematically and to use observation instruments accurately

c. evaluate changes in pupil behavior and assist teachers in evaluating change

d. identify pupil strengths and limitations from appraisal data and communicate this as needed to members of populations served

e. assist teachers in developing specific skills such as group guidance, interaction analysis, behavior observation techniques, etc.

3. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to demonstrate a proficiency and have a commitment to guide the development of <u>every</u> pupil in understanding the world of work, and additionally with either a salable skill for immediate employment or a realistic career plan.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. assist pupils in translating information into goals and decisions

b. prepare pupils in the use of career information, job applications, career interviews, etc.

c. assist pupils in locating relevant information

d. assist pupils in securing information necessary in decision-making (i.e., career information service)

e. assist pupils in implementing decisions concerning job placement, school selection, etc.

f. assist teachers in integrating the concepts of occupational-career development in the curriculum

D. Coordination

Role--The counselor must be able to coordinate data collection, activities, and procedures to facilitate the learning process. Through this role he coordinates:

- the various aspects of the guidance program in a meaningful sequence of guidance services for all pupils, staff, and community
- the accumulation of meaningful information concerning pupils as needed, through such means as interviews, standardized test scores, academic records, anecdotal records, personal data forms, records of past experiences, and inventories
- the interpretation of pupil information to pupils, parents, teachers, administrators, pupil personnel team members, and others professionally concerned with the pupil
- the identification of pupils with special needs which require the services of referral agents both within the school system and the community
- with administrators and teachers (1) to provide appropriate classroom placement for pupils with special abilities or disabilities, and (2) to establish procedures for course selection by pupils and grouping of pupils
- with the school social worker (visiting teacher), nurse, speech therapist, school physician, psychologist, and other staff members to identify community referral agencies and their services
- the development of referral procedures and in the maintenance of liaison and cooperative working relationships with community resources
- through a follow-up, to referral agency, recommendations to assist the pupil and/or his family work through the problems
- with the school staff activities designed to assist pupils with course selection decisions as these effect future educational and career plans
- the use of faculty advisors for assisting pupils in planning their areas of interest
- with the school staff activities designed to assist in the integration of occupational - career orientation and development into the curriculum
- the preparation of occupational and educational materials and publications for pupils and parents

- conferences with admissions personnel and personnel directors and visits educational and training institutions as well as businesses and industries applicable to pupils in his school

- placement of pupils in jobs outside of the school using school staff and community agents in a consultative capacity

- studies to evaluate the program of guidance services using both school and community personnel and uses the results of such studies in program development and revisions

1. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to formulate a model to utilize available data processing equipment for facilitating the processing and transmission of pupil data.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. identify district educational data elements of value to teachers, administrators, other pupil personnel services, and pupils

b. disseminate and interpret processed pupil data for maximum utilization

c. identify data elements in community resources to be used in occupational-career orientation

2. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to develop effective working relationships with, and between, members of the educational community.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. assist teachers in preparing units or materials for carrying out guidance responsibilities in the classroom, (i.e., career exploration)

b. provide information and materials for pupil, faculty, administrator, pupil personnel team members, and parent use (i.e., prediction tables, charts, bulletins, etc.)

c. initiate and coordinate team efforts in activities such as the case conference

3. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to formulate and coordinate studies.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. follow-up graduates or pupils who have withdrawn from school

b. relationship of scholastic aptitude and achievement to selection of course of study, class placement, and post high school educational and occupational placement

c. characteristics, as well as educational and guidance needs of the pupils

d. the use of records and pupil personnel data

e. occupational trends in the community

f. evaluation of the school's counseling and guidance services

g. identification of relevant sources of research and develop a design for communicating research findings effectively

4. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to interpret results of studies to staff, parents, pupils, and community agents and use the results in program development and revision.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. collect and disseminate to pupils and parents information concerning careers and opportunities for further education and training, and school offerings. These activities should be provided through a carefully planned sequence and may include group and individual sessions with pupils and parents, special programs, provisions of up-to-date educational and occupational files readily accessible to pupils, bulletin boards, guidance newsletters, and visits by pupils to educational institutions and business and industry

b. utilize materials (tests, booklets, journals, etc.) to assist school personnel in individualizing instruction

c. initiate guidance activities to be integrated into educational programs

5. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to internalize the theories, techniques, and materials of educational, occupational, and individual assessment.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. identify pupils who require specialized assistance such as learning skills

b. identify pupils who desire specialized assistance in occupational-career orientation

c. identify pupils who have adjustment difficulties requiring special assistance

d. locate appropriate referral sources for specific pupil needs

e. utilize up-to-date educational and occupational information resources necessary to assist each pupil with both short-term and long-term decision making, planning, and placement

6. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to conceptualize the operational structure of the school environment in order to effectively implement a program of guidance services.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. understand the roles and functions of the staff and their contributions to the guidance program

b. have knowledge of school policies and procedures

c. have knowledge of the administrative processes within the school district

7. COMPETENCY--The counselor must be able to formulate a model which will produce effective public relations for the guidance program.

EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES:

a. coordinate the preparation of materials and publications for pupils and parents that explain guidance services

b. participate in programs of civic organizations and other community groups to explain guidance program services and gain support for the program

c. prepare or furnish information for articles in school and community publications, radio and television shows, and other available media concerning the guidance program

V. SUMMARY

When a school counselor is employed, the administration, faculty, parents, and community should expect him to have the ability to plan, counsel, consult, and coordinate in a professional and accountable manner. The results of the counselor's efforts should facilitate the learning process for every pupil.

Planning, organization, management, and evaluation of programs enable the counselor to determine the areas of need within the school and direct his efforts on the basis of defined needs toward the goal of an effective and efficient learning environment for all pupils.

Counseling provides a setting necessary for those learnings about self and others which cannot be accommodated in other school settings. The central focus of the counseling relationship is upon the one being counseled rather than external data.

Consultation provides the support and information necessary in educational planning and occupational-career orientation and planning for individuals and groups. Consultation is two or more persons meeting in an effort to understand or cope with behavior, or elements that influence behavior, with the focus being external to those in consultation.

Coordination is the integration of the resources of the school and community--ideas, things, and people. The counselor, through this integration, is responsible for assisting and supporting the development of programs which will stimulate and motivate every student in the learning process so that all may become responsible, economically productive citizens.

Guiding Principles for the Preparation and Assignment of Counselors

1. There shall be only one certificate for counselors. This certificate shall qualify the holder for assignment in all general and special counseling positions in the public schools.

2. This certificate shall be based on demonstrated performance competencies of the holder to function adequately and equally in all areas of the public school program without additional preparation or experience in any one area.

3. The certification of counselors shall be independent of the certification of teachers. Orientation in the various teaching specialization fields which the counselor should have to function properly as a counselor in such fields shall be incorporated as a part of performance-based programs of counselor preparation rather than as specific teacher preparation programs in those fields.

4. A common purpose among all areas of public school education is the recognition that every student--exceptional, drop out, terminal, or college bound--must become an economically productive citizen. The one professional area that can bring into focus all the individual efforts of each educational specialty to reach this common purpose is counseling. Thus counseling should not be specialized toward any one special area but should operate separately and equally among all educational areas. To meet this common purpose, all counselors must be specifically occupationally and career oriented.

   As a prerequisite to certification, <u>every</u> counselor must demonstrate a proficiency and a commitment to guide the development in <u>every</u> student with the understanding of the world of work, and additionally with either a salable skill for immediate employment or a realistic career plan.

5. Preparation programs for counselors shall be designed to provide performance-based master's degree level graduates with professional certification; provided however, such programs shall also provide bachelor degree graduates with sufficient performance competencies that they may qualify for a special assignment permit to serve in counseling type positions at pay grade 7 in a public school under the immediate supervision of a professionally certified counselor.

6. In depth preparation in one or more specialized areas should not occur prior to the master's degree, but should be encouraged thereafter. Such specialization, however, should not be a prerequisite to certification for or assignment to a counseling position in the public schools.

7. Until certified counselors can become available to the public schools in accordance with these basic principles, all interim programs of preservice and in-service preparations shall be, insofar as possible, directed toward the accomplishment of the objectives listed in these principles.